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SUBJECT: QATAR LIKELY TO SUPPORT FURTHER IRAN SANCTIONS IF
SHORT OF "RED LINES"

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Derived from: DSCG 05-1, B,D.

¶1. (C) Summary. The GOQ's Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mohamed al-Rumaihi, who holds the UN portfolio, told Ambassador Greg Schulte June 4 that Qatar would likely support additional Iran sanctions in the UN Security Council if the sanctions did not exceed unspecified red lines. Rumaihi advocated targeted sanctions of three to four months' duration. He expressed concern about outside assistance for Iran's nuclear program. He said he believes the Iranians play for time and make statements about certain facilities in order to draw attention from activities in other locations. He gave a detailed military analysis in which a strike, if "surgical," would need to be sufficiently devastating to render Iran incapable of retaliation. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Permanent Representative to the UN Office in Vienna and the International Atomic Energy Agency, Ambassador Greg Schulte, met with Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohamed al-Rumaihi June 4 to continue consultations on Iran nuclear issues. He briefed the Qatari official on the installation of additional centrifuge cascades in Iran, which violate three UN Security Council resolutions, and on Iran's withholding or withdrawing of cooperation with the IAEA. Ambassador Schulte reviewed with al-Rumaihi the IAEA's latest report, which noted Iran's statement that it will no longer inform the agency of plans to build new nuclear facilities and also noted plutonium-related activities in Arak, to which IAEA inspectors were denied access. Ambassador Schulte said that the U.S. goal remains the same: a diplomatic solution, which requires changing Iran's preferences so that it will accept the U.S./EU package of incentives offered in June ¶2006.

¶3. (C) Al-Rumaihi did not expect much to come from in talks between EU Foreign Minister Javier Solana and Iran's nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani. He believed the Iranians might be playing for time. He said he believed Solana is serious, but the EU member states need to help him more, for example by providing information on what equipment the Iranians are seeking to acquire. He said that the international community was "giving a chance" to Solana, but the crisis needed to be solved within a time limit. "In three years, the Iranians have only gained time," al-Rumaihi said.

¶4. (C) He believed that Iran "needs the help" of Pakistani, Indian, Chinese, central Asian, or South African experts to complete its nuclear work, in addition to imported equipment.

"They can't do it alone.... My approach is to ban experts' assistance," he said. Rumaihi said the Iranians were likely playing a game of deception, "attracting attention" to Arak while engaging in work elsewhere.

15. (C) Rumaihi said that "we have to know what they (the Iranians) want" -- the U.S./EU package, civilian nuclear technology, relations with the United States, or "a bomb" -- in order to be able to properly induce them to give up enrichment. However, it is important to show the Iranians that they "don't have a free hand" in the region, he said.

Military View

16. (S/NF) Rumaihi, a former army officer, presented a military analysis. To be successful, a military strike must be either on a large scale or, if "surgical," must be "heavy" and protect the Gulf waters. An attack should not leave Iran with a retaliatory capability, he said. For their part, the Iranians are not capable of major military action, according to al-Rumaihi: "They know their equipment will be destroyed." But they will use artillery and missiles, he said, noting that missiles "are a danger to us and to you." He added that Iran could use chemical or biological weapons "with some success" because of the short flight time from Iran to the Gulf states. "We need to be aware and take precautions," he said. Gulf states were concerned about any attack on the Bushehr nuclear power plant site because of the potential to throw harmful nuclear material into Gulf waters. The Israelis appeared to be "under control" from a military point of view, according to Rumaihi. If they entered a conflict with Iran, a "global problem" would be the result because of sensitive public feeling on the Palestinian issue.

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Additional Sanctions

17. (C) So far, Iran was only becoming stronger with each round of sanctions, Rumaihi argued. He suggested that further sanctions, if applied, should be focused on diplomats, trade, carpets, pistachios ("we can do without them for a time"), and financial transactions, but not on goods which average Iranians needed for daily living. "We prefer Iran to be able to sell oil but buy only food and medicine," Rumaihi said. "Let the Iranians (i.e., the leadership) feel they're not well-treated." But he called for sanctions limited to three or for months linked to a decision timeline.

The Key Question: Next Vote on Iran

18. (C) At a follow-on lunch, Ambassador Schulte asked Rumaihi what Qatar's position would be on tightening sanctions on Iran in the UN Security Council. Rumaihi replied that he could not speak definitively for his government on the matter but that Qatar would "have to" support a subsequent resolution as long it doesn't exceed "certain limits," which he did not specify. He said that it was important for Qatar to uphold the unity of the Security Council and not give Iran the impression that some countries are with it while others are against it.

19. (U) Post thanks Ambassador Schulte for traveling to Doha for this consultation and related public diplomacy appearances.
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